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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Reform of the United Nations and its impact on the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) resolution 553 (XXVI) established an ad hoc working group open to all ECLAC members and empowered, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, to define priorities for the work programme and recommend to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, taking into account the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as budgetary considerations.

2. All of the above is being undertaken in the context of reform of the United Nations, which is now being called upon to adjust to new circumstances, not only with respect to organization, management and budget, but also in matters such as defining institutional identity, eliminating duplication and refining its programme of work better to meet the most crucial needs of the member States.

3. In compliance with this mandate, the ad hoc working group met at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, from 29 to 31 July 1996, under the chairmanship of Costa Rica. The meeting was attended by representatives of 32 member States and 2 associate members.

4. As a result of this exercise a number of adjustments were approved in the priorities for the execution of the programme of work of the ECLAC system, 1998-1999.

5. Following the suggestion of some member States, a meeting of delegates from the Permanent Missions of ECLAC member States to the United Nations in New York took place on 25 October in order to examine the final report of the Santiago meeting.

6. The following is the set of documents relevant to the exercise:

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean resolution 553 (XXVI) (annex I)

2. Report of the meeting of the ad hoc working group established pursuant to resolution 553 (XXVI) (annex II) and changes suggested to the order of priorities for the execution of the ECLAC work programme (appendix)

3. Proposed order of priorities for the execution of the programme of work of the ECLAC system, 1998-1999*

4. Meeting of representatives of States members of ECLAC to the United Nations to hear the report of the first meeting of the ad hoc working group*

5. Programme of work of the ECLAC system, 1998-1999*

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* To be made available as background documents in the languages of submission only.

Annex I

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
RESOLUTION 553 (XXVI)

Reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,

Recalling Commission resolutions 520 (XXIV) and 541 (XXV) on the role and functions of ECLAC and the consequences for it of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social fields,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 48/162 and decision 49/411 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres and other questions relating thereto, and resolution 48/218 and decision 49/461 on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations,

Bearing in mind also the guidelines emanating from the open-ended high-level working group established by General Assembly resolution 49/252 with a mandate to undertake a thorough review of the revitalization, strengthening and reform of the United Nations system,

Taking note of the content of the Declaration issued by the States Members and observers of the United Nations on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and, in particular, of the proposal for ensuring that the United Nations enters the twenty-first century equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established,

Reaffirming its conviction that the activities entrusted to the Commission by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 106 (VI) retain their full validity in the light of the present circumstances and the foreseeable future of the Latin American and Caribbean countries,

Having before it the note by the secretariat entitled "Reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC" (LC/G.1899(SES.26/4)), of 22 January 1996,

Convinced that, as a new century dawns, sustainable development should occupy an important place in the agenda of the United Nations,

Convinced further that it is essential for the United Nations, in carrying out activities in the economic and social fields, to take account of the regional dimension and the decentralization of tasks in accordance with the comparative advantages of Headquarters and the subsidiary organs located in the developing regions,

1. Affirms that, in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC is especially well qualified to undertake the tasks entrusted to it by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 106 (VI), in the framework of a restructured United Nations;

2. Declares, therefore, that ECLAC should function as a centre of excellence charged with collaborating with member States in a comprehensive analysis of development processes geared to the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and the resulting provision of operational services in the fields of specialized information, advisory services, training and support for regional and international cooperation and coordination;

3. Declares further that, in order to play a relevant role with greater effectiveness and efficiency, ECLAC will need to adapt to the evolving development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, within the framework of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations;

4. Recommends that the institutional structure and pattern of conferences of the ECLAC system, including the practice of holding biennial sessions of the main forum, should continue to serve as the foundation in maintaining the simplicity, effectiveness and flexibility of the Commission;

5. Recommends further that ECLAC should pursue its efforts to improve its performance, productivity, impact, efficiency and effectiveness, taking into account, where appropriate, ongoing processes pertaining to the United Nations as a whole;

6. Instructs the Executive Secretary, therefore, to:

(a) Pursue and strengthen the institutional development and management upgrading activities aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities which ECLAC carries out in fulfilment of the mandates conferred on it by member States;

(b) Improve the indicators for evaluating the activities of the Commission in terms of performance, productivity and impact;

(c) Intensify consultation and strengthen cooperation and coordination with other United Nations organs, agencies and programmes, particularly the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, taking special care to avoid duplication of activities;

(d) Strengthen existing cooperation and coordination with other multilateral organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization of American States, the Latin American Economic System and other Latin American and Caribbean institutions pursuing similar objectives in the region, again taking care to avoid duplication of activities;

7. Decides to establish an ad hoc working group open to all ECLAC member countries, to be headed by the Chairman of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission, which group, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, is empowered to define priorities for the work programme and recommend to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, taking into account the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as budgetary considerations. The first meeting of this ad hoc working group will be held within 90 days at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, and any

subsequent meetings will be held preferably at either of the subregional headquarters of ECLAC or at United Nations Headquarters in New York;

8. Entrusts the ad hoc working group with preparing a progress report to be transmitted through the Executive Secretary to the resumed substantive session of the Economic and Social Council for consideration at the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly and with transmitting its proposals regarding the priorities for the 1998-1999 work programme through the appropriate channels to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session;

9. Further entrusts the ad hoc working group with submitting a final report on the review of priorities for the programme of work of ECLAC to the next session of the Commission.

Annex II

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 553 (XXVI), HELD AT SANTIAGO, CHILE, 29-31 JULY 1996*

I. MANDATE

1. Resolution 553 (XXVI) of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) established an ad hoc working group open to all ECLAC members. This group, headed by the Chairman of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission, was empowered, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, to define priorities for the work programme and recommend to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, taking into account the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as budgetary considerations. The resolution further provided that the first meeting of the ad hoc working group was to be held at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, within 90 days following the twenty-sixth session.

II. PLACE AND DATE OF THE MEETING

2. The first meeting of the ad hoc working group took place at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, from 29 to 31 July 1996.

III. ATTENDANCE

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

4. Two associate members of the Commission were also represented: Aruba and Netherlands Antilles.

IV. OPENING MEETING

5. The Chairman of the Presiding Officers of the twenty-sixth session, Mr. Melvin Sáenz Biolly of Costa Rica, welcomed the participants and reminded them that ECLAC resolution 553 (XXVI) not only provided the mandate for the meeting but also reflected the interest of the member States in broadening the

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* Previously issued under the symbol LC/G.1942. This document should be read in conjunction with the draft programme of work of the ECLAC system for 1998-1999, which will be made available for information.

contribution of the United Nations to development. He pointed out that ECLAC had already begun to take steps to increase its efficiency, as part of an important process of innovation undertaken by the entire Organization, a process that some labelled "reform", but that his country preferred to call "modernization" or "bringing up to date". He recalled that the central purpose of the meeting was to determine what priorities the member countries wished to assign to activities within the programme of work and stressed that the Commission's vital role was to function as a centre of excellence devoted to the study of the main aspects of economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

6. Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, cordially welcomed the representatives of the Governments participating in the ad hoc working group. He said that, beyond its immediate objectives, this forum for interchange between the secretariat and the Governments of the member States would be helpful in adapting the future work of the Commission to changes in the availability of resources and in the demands of the Governments. The exercise was taking place in the wider context of reform of the United Nations, which was now being called upon to adjust to new circumstances, not only with respect to organization, management and budget, but also in matters such as defining institutional identity, eliminating duplication and refining its programme of work better to meet the most crucial needs of the Member States. Because the process of programme planning and priority setting had to begin three years in advance, while budgetary matters were handled by other parts of the Organization, some degree of flexibility was needed in order to accommodate new priorities and changes in available resources - through an interchange with member Governments. Up to now, such interaction had taken place during the session and through bilateral consultations. Now, however, the rapid pace of change made it highly advisable to undertake this exercise more frequently and as a group.

7. The fundamental role of ECLAC was to join with Governments in thinking about ways to overcome obstacles to development from a regional perspective with a view to practical action. He emphasized that the Commission's mandate in this respect was broad, and for that reason it had chosen a basically thematic approach to its programme of work, an approach which cut across divisional lines and allowed for greater flexibility. Turning to the secretariat's proposal for organizing the debate, he explained that a set of charts had been prepared in which each activity had been tentatively classified into one of four categories of priority, ranging from the essential to those that in fact could not be carried out unless frozen resources were again made available. The anticipated output would be a revised programme of work in accord with reality and the desires of the Governments.

8. Lastly, he pointed out that the institution did not draw a sharp distinction between analytical and operational activities, but saw them as complementary. Operational activities developed out of the analytical framework, which gave them coherence. In response to concern about financing such activities with extrabudgetary resources, he explained that the practice grew out of the secretariat's interest in joining forces with other organizations, which proposed operational activities utilizing the capital that ECLAC chiefly had to offer, namely its analytical capacity, and were willing to

finance the activities, an opportunity too good for the institution to neglect. On the subject of possible duplication of tasks, he said that the Commission was in constant communication with other international organizations and maintained a network of contacts with other research centres in order to arrive at a division of labour that would take into account the comparative advantages of each institution. With regard to the scope of the exercise in which the meeting was now engaged, he described it as a process that would produce an output, namely, a preliminary agreement on what priority to assign the activities.

9. As a working procedure, the Executive Secretary then proposed a general analysis of the non-paper prepared by the secretariat, followed by a brief oral presentation preceding the examination of each subprogramme. He said that the final output of the meeting would be, first, a report that would reflect the decisions reached by the delegations but would not include a summary of each statement and, second, a revised version of the programme of work that had been approved at the last session, adapted to take into account the emphases recommended by the working group.

V. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

10. The exchange of ideas between the delegations and the secretariat included both a general debate on the nature of the exercise and a detailed examination of the subprogrammes.

A. General debate

11. The delegations agreed that the priority-setting exercise for the programme of work of the ECLAC system for the biennium 1998-1999 was an aspect of the examination of the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 still being conducted by the States members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at the Secretariat in New York.

12. It was emphasized that the exercise must be ongoing and flexible. Because of the long lead-time that characterized the United Nations programming process, priorities should be able to be readjusted in the future to take account of changing circumstances in the world and the region. It was agreed that the exercise marked the start of a mechanism of dialogue and consultation between the member States and the secretariat both on setting the agenda and work programmes of the ECLAC system and on evaluating the execution of these programmes.

13. It was also stressed that the objective of the meeting was to set priorities for the programme of work of the ECLAC system for the biennium 1998-1999. While this process would clearly have budget implications for the future, they were not to be dealt with on this occasion, since consideration of the financial aspects of the exercise was the work of other organs of the United Nations system.

14. The delegations agreed that in undertaking the priority-setting exercise they would view the programme of work in an integrated manner. Thus,

adjustments to the priority accorded activities within a given subprogramme would not necessarily have to be compensated within that subprogramme. Delegations also agreed that all thematic subprogrammes should be applicable to the wider membership, notwithstanding the existence of subprogrammes 10 and 11. In this regard, they emphasized the need to pay particular attention to the small economies of the region.

15. Some delegations suggested that ECLAC should concentrate its efforts on the areas in which it enjoyed comparative advantages and should leave aside those that could be better addressed by other agencies or organizations or should enter into strategic alliances with them in order to carry out selected activities jointly.

16. It was also observed that the secretariat was in an excellent position to foster and facilitate cooperation activities within the Latin American and Caribbean region and between the region and other parts of the world.

17. The meeting concurred with the proposal of one delegation that the programme of work should pay special heed to the social dimension in all subject areas.

18. In the course of the general debate, it was repeatedly urged that the ECLAC programme of work should more adequately reflect the needs and requirements of the Caribbean members of the Commission. There was a consensus that in addition to the activities included under the Caribbean subprogramme, the activities of an analytical and operational nature carried out by ECLAC headquarters in Santiago should also give more effective and specific consideration to the characteristic aspects of these economies.

19. A number of delegations also asked the secretariat to consider the possibility of allocating greater resources from the regular budget (in Professional person/months) to operational activities. In addition, the secretariat was asked to provide more information in its report about the use of extrabudgetary resources for operational activities.

20. Lastly, the secretariat was asked to revise and update the lists of recipients of its publications in order to disseminate more effectively the outputs of the work programme.

B. Consideration of the subprogrammes

21. The meeting focused on classifying and assigning priorities to the specific activities that made up the subject areas of the programme of work of the ECLAC system for the biennium 1998-1999 previously adopted by resolution 559 (XXVI) at the twenty-sixth session of ECLAC, held in San José, Costa Rica, in April 1996.

22. The subprogrammes were presented to the delegations one by one by the secretariat and were the subject of detailed debate. As a result of the debate, the secretariat made changes in the priorities based on concrete proposals adopted by consensus or on its interpretation of the feeling of the majority of

the delegations. The changes arising from the discussion of each subprogramme are summarized below.

SUBPROGRAMME 1: LINKAGES WITH THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, COMPETITIVENESS AND PRODUCTION SPECIALIZATION

Subject area 1.2: National trade policies and market integration

Assign "B" priority to the expert meeting to consider the room for action open to the Governments of the region as regards their policies for improving linkages with the global economy (paragraph (a)) and to the study on the impact of multilateral, regional and hemispheric commitments on trade policies in the region (subparagraph (b) (i)).

Subject area 1.5: Patterns of trade specialization

(a) Assign "D" priority to the study on technological development and exports, based on a comparative analysis of various Asian and Latin American experiences (subparagraph (a) (iii)).

(b) Note that the delegations of Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela differ in the priorities they would assign to the subject areas included under this subprogramme.

(c) Add the intraregional dimension to this subject area.

(d) Strengthen the Caribbean presence in the various subject areas of the subprogramme.

SUBPROGRAMME 2: INTEGRATION, OPEN REGIONALISM AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Subject area 2.1: Convergence of the integration process: economic, regulatory and institutional aspects

(a) It was agreed to include under this subject area the social aspects of convergence of the integration process.

(b) It was duly noted that the activities in support of the hemispheric integration process mentioned under paragraph (c) should be complemented by those mentioned under subject areas 3.5 (a) (iv); 4.5 (c); 10.4 and 10.5; and 11.1 (b). It was pointed out, moreover, that many of the analytical activities to be carried out under the subprogramme were relevant to both hemispheric and subregional integration processes, so that the entire programme would indirectly have an impact on the specific tasks the ECLAC secretariat was to perform in support of the various integration processes under way among the countries members of the Commission.

Subject area 2.2: Intraregional investments: the internationalization of Latin American and Caribbean companies

(a) It was agreed that attention should be focused on the promotion of intraregional investments in Latin America and the Caribbean and that observations on the Asian experience should be taken as points of reference only.

(b) It was agreed that operational activities (paragraph (c)) should be moved up to priority "B".

Subject area 2.3: The social dimension of regional integration

It was urged that it would be helpful, to the extent possible, to increase the number of person/months devoted to the subject of the social dimension of integration.

Subject area 2.4: Regional transport infrastructure and services

(a) It was suggested that the possibility should be considered of reducing the proposed number of person/months and strengthening other subject areas.

(b) It was also suggested that consideration should be given to the social aspects of this subject area.

SUBPROGRAMME 3: PRODUCTIVE, TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

Subject area 3.5: Factors determining the behaviour of key agents such as transnational corporations, national groups and small and medium-sized companies

It was decided to assign "B" priority to the study on the internationalization of Latin American companies through investment abroad, both inside and outside the region (subparagraph (a) (ii)).

Subject area 3.6: Urban and interurban transport

It was decided to assign "C" priority to the intermediate activities in support of various regional forums in matters connected with urban and interurban transport (paragraph (c)).

SUBPROGRAMME 4: ECONOMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND POLICIES

Subject area 4.2: Analysis of development strategies and economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean

(a) It was proposed that "B" priority should be assigned to the study on economic policies designed to help withstand external shocks, with emphasis on the analysis of fluctuations in capital flows in highly volatile situations and their impact on the domestic economy in such aspects as the exchange rate, saving and stability of the banking sector (subparagraph (b) (ii)).

(b) With regard to the subject of external debt and the impact of overindebtedness on development, which was raised by one of the delegations, the secretariat reported that, although for most of the countries of the region the topic no longer had the same priority in the respective national agenda, it continued to monitor debt trends as part of its regular task of analysing the economic situation of the region. Another delegation pointed out that the subject fell within the purview of other bodies and institutions, including the Paris Club.

Subject area 4.5: Analysis of the developed economies of the hemisphere and their incidence on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean

(a) It was decided to assign "C" priority to the information notes on the United States and Canadian economies (subparagraphs (a) (i) and (ii)).

(b) The meeting stressed the need to give due consideration and coverage to subjects relevant to the Caribbean subregion in the work under this subprogramme.

SUBPROGRAMME 5: SOCIAL UNDERPINNING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A number of delegations stressed that the subject of this subprogramme was of great importance to the programme of work as a whole.

Subject area 5.3: Effects of economic and social development policies on well-being and equity

Some delegations requested that "B" priority be given to the expert meeting (paragraph (a)) and the non-recurrent publications (paragraph (b)). No activities were identified which could be reduced in priority to compensate for these changes.

Subject area 5.4: Analysis of the effects associated with the cultivation, trafficking and consumption of drugs, and integrated strategies for combating them

It was agreed to maintain the priority proposed for activity (c) and to cut down the number of meetings (paragraphs (a) and (b)) to the minimum.

SUBPROGRAMME 6: STRATEGIC ADMINISTRATION AND STATE REFORM

Subject areas 6.1 to 6.5

(a) There were no proposals to change the priorities originally suggested by the secretariat, although some delegations would have liked to assign higher priority to certain activities. The possibility of obtaining more extrabudgetary funding for those activities was mentioned.

(b) There was agreement that it would be necessary to look for ways to enhance the impact of this subprogramme in the Caribbean subregion; the secretariat reported that it had already begun to take steps to that end.

Subject area 6.6: Changes in the management of mining resources and reform of the energy sector in Latin America and the Caribbean

It was clarified that there was no overlap with subject area 1.7, which dealt with competitiveness, but that the two were complementary.

SUBPROGRAMME 7: ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY

Although concern was expressed that ECLAC might be trying to cover too many subjects of a complex nature in view of its limited resources, the secretariat explained, first, that there was good coordination and cooperation with other agencies and organizations concerned with these topics and a sensible division of labour based on their respective comparative advantages; second, that ECLAC was concentrating its efforts on the areas in which it had recognized strength and capacity; and lastly, that it was making an effort to weed out subjects or activities that were more properly handled by other agencies and for which ECLAC could not put together sufficient critical mass.

There was general agreement that the limited resources available should be concentrated on the activities with the highest priority, and hence the following was proposed:

(a) Assign lowest priority to all the activities in subject area 7.3 (Instruments for environmental management and sustainable development and systems of environment-oriented spatial planning);

(b) Reassign to subject areas 7.1 (Evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21) and 7.2 (Policies for conservation of the biodiversity of the Latin American and the Caribbean countries), human resources previously allocated to other subject areas.

SUBPROGRAMME 8: POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Subject area 8.1: Collaboration with the countries of the region in the implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development

It was decided to assign "B" priority to the study on the specific implications of integration in terms of migratory movements (subparagraph (c) (iii)) and to compensate for that change by reducing the number of person/months allocated to another activity or other activities in order to maintain the same overall priority for the subprogramme.

SUBPROGRAMME 9: STATISTICS AND ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

There was consensus that the activities included under this subprogramme represented one of the areas of excellence of ECLAC and were, moreover, being carried out in close collaboration with other international organizations concerned with the subject; it was noted that apart from those specifically mentioned, many other tasks were being carried out under the subprogramme with extrabudgetary resources.

In consequence, no changes were proposed in the priorities suggested by the secretariat for the different activities under the subprogramme.

SUBPROGRAMME 10: SUBREGIONAL ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

The delegations expressed their appreciation for the work the secretariat was doing under this subprogramme to support development in the subregion and promote linkages between it and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean.

It was requested that special attention be paid under this subprogramme to the subject of integration of services in the Central American subregion, for which efforts should be made to obtain extrabudgetary resources.

No changes were proposed in the priorities suggested by the secretariat for the different activities under the subprogramme.

SUBPROGRAMME 11: SUBREGIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Apart from overall considerations concerning the subregion expressed during the general debate, the meeting arrived at some specific conclusions during its examination of this subprogramme. First, the Governments of the subregion required special help in improving the generation of quantitative information. Second, the subregional Governments also required greater technical assistance to help them resolve their development problems, for which the resources currently assigned to the secretariat of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) appeared to be inadequate. Third, under all subprogrammes the secretariat should take into consideration and adequately interpret the particular situation of the Caribbean subregion.

Subject area 11.3: Development of production and technology

It was agreed that "B" priority should be given to the expert meeting to analyse various aspects of technology and its relation to the economic and social development of the Caribbean (paragraph (b)).

It was also agreed that "C" priority should be assigned to the study evaluating the science and technology networks operating in the subregion and their effectiveness (subparagraph (c) (iv)).

It was proposed that "B" priority should be assigned to the document on recent trends and developments in the manufacturing sector of some Caribbean countries to be determined (subparagraph (c) (iv)).

No activities were identified which could be reduced in priority to compensate for these changes.

C. Summary

23. At the conclusion of the exercise, it was found that there was a slight imbalance, because the number of activities raised in priority exceeded those lowered in priority. The secretariat pointed out that the imbalance amounted to

only about 1 per cent and in order to preserve the integrity of the process it would undertake to adjust for the imbalance by changing the number of months of work assigned to the activities in question.

VI. CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

A. Input from the Executive Secretary

24. In summing up the discussion that had taken place over the past three days, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC indicated that he believed he would be correctly interpreting the views of all the participants in outlining a set of general conclusions to be drawn from the present exercise. First, by its very existence, the working group had already amply demonstrated its usefulness as a forum in which the secretariat and the Governments of the member countries could undertake an in-depth examination of the programme of work. Never before had the ECLAC programme of work been debated in such detail, and that debate was evidence of a new approach in keeping with the main aims of the effort to reform the United Nations. Second, the difficulty of structuring a programme of work which fully reflected the desires and objectives of each of the member countries had been demonstrated yet again by the exercise undertaken in the course of the last few days. A number of the dilemmas posed by the design of a relevant programme of activities had been analysed at the most recent session of the Commission in San José during the discussion of the document entitled "Reform of the United Nations and its impact on ECLAC. Note by the secretariat". Those dilemmas had surfaced once again during the present meeting and included the following: finding the dividing line between a concentration on high-impact activities and the necessity of forming an institutional view regarding the wide spectrum of major development issues confronting the Latin American and Caribbean countries; maintaining a certain balance between the allocation of resources to each of the subprogrammes and the possibility of concentrating on a smaller number of subprogrammes; striking the balance often mentioned between analytical and operational activities; distributing activities between the Commission's headquarters in Santiago and its subregional headquarters; and linking funding drawn from budgetary resources with funding from extrabudgetary resources. The greatest dilemma of all, however, was posed by the extraordinarily heavy demand for services in relation to the paucity of resources available to the ECLAC secretariat. Third, analysis of the subprogrammes and their component activities had obscured, to some extent, the overall view of the work programme. Most of the activities included in the 11 subprogrammes reinforced one another, and the secretariat was striving to increase interdivisional activities as a way of ensuring the internal consistency of the programme as a whole. This meeting was only the beginning of the process involved in adapting the Commission's outputs to the level of available resources.

25. In specific terms, a number of adjustments had been made in the priorities for the programme of work. While strong interest had been expressed in raising the priority rankings of numerous activities in the programme, in view of the Organization's present budgetary situation, particular care had been taken to counterbalance the increases in priority assigned to some activities by lowering the priorities assigned to others, although there were some cases in which this

had not proved possible. The secretariat would identify programme elements that might be adjusted in order to achieve that balance. At all events, such cases represented modest amounts and would account for less than 3 per cent of the number of person/months allocated to the execution of the entire programme of work. The table contained in the annex provided an overview of those adjustments.

26. Even more significant than the specific adjustments, however, was the institution of a new approach to the formulation of the programme of work, an approach that with time would no doubt be refined as similar exercises were undertaken as part of the effort to "modernize" - to use the term employed by the Chairman of the working group - the entire United Nations system. Part of this effort involved avoiding overlap and duplication, both within the United Nations system and between its various components and other intergovernmental organizations. This point had been commented upon many times by the working group in connection with the potential for collaboration between ECLAC and other agencies in carrying out joint activities or in identifying their working "niches" based on the comparative advantages of each organization. The Executive Secretary agreed with the sentiments expressed by the representatives on this score and recalled that in addition to the formal mechanisms of coordination that already existed, the secretariat was following - and would continue to follow - a policy of self-monitoring to avoid serious duplication in its programme of work.

27. This led him, in conclusion, to ask what the next steps should be. The first step was obvious, since it was called for in resolution 553 (XXVI): the revised programme of work, with priorities now assigned, together with the report of the meeting of the working group, should be presented to the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council for its consideration during the fifty-first regular session of the General Assembly. The next step would involve the future activities of the working group. In this regard, it was his opinion that the group had already demonstrated its usefulness and should meet again whenever circumstances made it advisable, at the request of the secretariat, the Chairman or one of the member States. This was a point on which the representatives would certainly wish to comment.

B. General debate

28. The debate which followed focused on the next steps to be taken to conclude the exercise commenced on this occasion. Some delegations - not the majority - suggested that it would be helpful to hold a further meeting, before the programme of work, with priorities assigned, were submitted to United Nations bodies in New York. Others pointed out that their Governments might find it difficult to send representatives to another meeting. After considering various alternatives, the Chairman suggested a procedure that met with general agreement, which consisted of the following steps. First, the secretariat would send all the delegations a preliminary version of the complete report within a very few days and give them two weeks to convey their comments and observations. The secretariat would then prepare a revised version of the report reflecting as fully as possible the comments and observations it had received and would attempt to strike a balance between the person/months allocated to each

subprogramme in order to maintain the desired proportion between the relative priorities assigned to the work programme. It would then send this revised version to the member Governments. After a further lapse of two weeks, unless it received new comments or observations, the Chairman and the secretariat would present the report of the meeting of the working group together with the programme of work with the agreed priorities to the permanent missions of the States Members of the United Nations in New York.

29. The working group did not have time to examine in depth the other matter raised by the Executive Secretary concerning future activities. Although the usefulness of holding regular meetings, perhaps annually, was generally acknowledged, consideration of the matter was postponed for further consultations.

C. Views of individual delegations

30. While all comments by representatives that represented the consensus of the meeting have been reflected in the final version of this report, some views were advanced by delegations on which there was no general agreement. Those positions are reported below.

31. Two delegations proposed including under subject area 2.2 activities relating to air transport, a topic of vital importance for the Caribbean countries and for the integration process within the region.

32. One delegation suggested that the non-recurrent publication mentioned in subparagraph (c) (ii) under subject area 1.6 should be downgraded from priority category "C" to "D". It also suggested upgrading the priority for the 6 person/months allocated to operational activities (paragraph (c)) under subject area 1.7 from category "C" to "B" and to compensate for that change by downgrading the 6 person/months allocated to intermediate activities (paragraph (d)) under the same subject area from "B" to "C". It further suggested standardizing under one priority category the four non-recurrent publications (subparagraph (b) (i)) under subject area 3.1.

33. One delegation requested that under subject area 4.4 ECLAC should engage in a collaborative programme with UNDP on information technology in the Caribbean and that "B" priority should be assigned to that activity.

34. One delegation suggested reducing the number of person/months allocated to the non-recurrent publications (subparagraph (a) (iii)) under subject area 4.5 and to intergovernmental meetings (subparagraphs (a) (i), (ii) and (iii)) under subject area 6.5. It also proposed downgrading the intermediate activities (subparagraph (d)) under subject area 6.6 from priority category "B" to "C".

35. One delegation proposed eliminating altogether subject area 5.3 from the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999.

36. One delegation suggested assigning "B" priority to the non-recurrent publication mentioned in subparagraph (a) (i) and the operational activities mentioned in subparagraph (b) (i) under subject area 7.3.

37. Two delegations proposed rationalizing the number of studies contemplated under subprogramme 11.

38. One delegation proposed reallocating resources from subprogramme 1 (Linkages with the global economy, competitiveness and production specialization) to subprogramme 11 (Subregional activities in the Caribbean), as follows:

- 2 person/months to be transferred from subject area 1.2, paragraph (c), to subject area 11.3, paragraph (c);

- 4 person/months to be transferred from subject area 1.7, paragraph (c), to subject area 11.4, subparagraph (c) (i).

39. One delegation proposed that the services to be provided under subject area 11.3, paragraph (e), and subject area 11.4, subparagraph (e) (i), should be implemented through the use of funds from the regular budget.

40. One delegation proposed assigning "B" priority to the study evaluating the possibilities for greater development of the industrial sector in some Caribbean countries (subject area 11.3, subparagraph (c) (ii)) and, to compensate for the change, assigning "C" priority to the study evaluating the efficacy of the projects on renewable sources of energy carried out in the Caribbean (subject area 11.3, subparagraph (c) (vii)).

41. Two delegations proposed that the working group should be transformed into a permanent body of the Commission.

42. Lastly, some delegations suggested that the final version of this document should be re-examined at a meeting of representatives from the permanent missions to the United Nations.

VII. CLOSING

43. In closing, the Chairman praised the energetic spirit and the frank and cordial atmosphere that had prevailed throughout the course of the meeting and said that he believed he spoke for all those present in saying that the participants could return to their respective countries fully satisfied with the work they had accomplished.

44. After thanking all the representatives, the Executive Secretary noted the broad participation, the high level of the delegations and the responsible manner in which they had made their views known to the secretariat. He expressed special thanks to Mr. Melvin Sáenz for his splendid chairmanship of the meeting and to the delegates for the dedication they had brought to their work. Finally, he applauded the highly constructive spirit that had characterized the entire meeting.

Appendix

CHANGES SUGGESTED BY THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP IN THE ORDER OF PRIORITIES PROPOSED BY THE SECRETARIAT FOR EXECUTION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE ECLAC SYSTEM, 1998-1999

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 1: LINKAGES WITH THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, COMPETITIVENESS AND PRODUCTION SPECIALIZATION					
1.2 National trade policies and market integration					
a) Organization and substantive servicing of meetings of experts					
Expert meeting to consider the room for action open to the Governments of the region as regards their policies for improving linkages with the global economy.		X[1]		(x)[2]	5
b) Non-recurrent publications					
i) A study on the impact of multilateral, regional and hemispheric commitments on trade policies in the region.		X		(x)	11

[1] In what follows, X shall indicate the change in priority category suggested by the group as the outcome of its work.

[2] In what follows, (x) shall indicate the priority category originally proposed by the secretariat to the meeting of the working group.

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
1.5 Patterns of trade specialization					
a) Non-recurrent publications					
iii) A study on technological development and exports, based on a comparative analysis of various Asian and Latin American experiences.		(x)		X	14

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 2: INTEGRATION, OPEN REGIONALISM AND REGIONAL COOPERATION					
2.2 Intraregional investments: the internationalization of Latin American companies					
c) Operational activities					
Advisory services					
Provision of technical cooperation services, to countries of the region that request them, in connection with the experiences of small and medium-sized firms in regional and subregional integration schemes. (XB)		X	(x)		1

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SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 3: PRODUCTIVE, TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT					
3.5 Factors determining the behaviour of key agents such as transnational corporations, national groups and small and medium-sized companies a) <u>Non-recurrent publications</u> ii) A study on the internationalization of Latin American companies through investment abroad, both inside and outside the region.		X		(x)	3
3.6 Urban and interurban transport c) <u>Intermediate activities</u> Support for the Conference of South American Ministers of Transport, Communications and Public Works and the permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) on matters connected with urban and interurban transport.		(x)	X		3

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SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 4: ECONOMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND POLICIES					
4.2 Analysis of development strategies and economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean					
b) Non-recurrent publications					
ii) A study on economic policies designed to help withstand external shocks, with emphasis on the analysis of fluctuations in capital flows in highly volatile situations and their impact on the domestic economy in such aspects as the exchange rate, saving and stability of the banking sector.		X	(x)		24
4.5 Analysis of the developed economies of the hemisphere and their incidence on the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean					
a) Non-periodic publications					
i) Two annual information notes on the United States and Canadian economies.			X		6
ii) Two annual information notes on the Canadian economy.		(x)	X		6

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 5: SOCIAL UNDERPINNING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
5.3 Effects of economic and social development policies on well-being and equity					
a) Organization and substantive servicing of meetings of experts					
Expert meeting on economic and social changes, critical obstacles in the human capital and labour markets, and their effects on well-being and equity.		X		(x)	6
b) Non-recurrent publications					
Two studies on the effects of economic and social development policies on well-being and equity, with emphasis on proposals for active instruments to make it possible to overcome critical obstacles in the main human capital and labour markets.		X		(x)	12

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 7: ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND RESOURCE SUSTAINABILITY					
7.3 Instruments for environmental management and sustainable development and systems of environment-oriented spatial planning a) <u>Non-recurrent publications</u> ii) A study on environment-oriented spatial planning in the context of the process of regionalization and transfer of responsibilities to local authorities. special attention will be given to the incorporation of environmental concepts such as hydrographic basin management and environmental impact assessment in territorial planning.		(x)		X	10

SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 8: POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT					
8.1 Collaboration with the countries of the region in the implementation of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development					
c) Non-recurrent publications					
iii) A study on the specific implications of integration in terms of migratory movements.		X	(x)		3

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SUBPROGRAMMES/ SUBJECT AREAS/ ACTIVITIES	RELATIVE PRIORITY				Estimated funding (expressed in person/months)
	A	B	C	D	
	10%	75%	10%	5%	
SUBPROGRAMME 11: SUBREGIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN					
11.3 Development of production and technology					
b) Organization and substantive servicing of meetings of exports					
Expert meeting to analyse various aspects of technology and its relation to the economic and social development of the Caribbean.		X	(x)		4
c) Non-recurrent publications					
iv) A study evaluating the science and technology networks operating in the subregion and their effectiveness.		(x)	X		4
v) A document on recent trends and developments in the manufacturing sector of some Caribbean countries to be determined.		X		(x)	4